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Weapons Sales 230

WASHINGTON AP - Thirteen Republican members of the House Banking Committee demanded Tuesday a full congressional review of the government-financed sale of weapons abroad.

In the wake of disclosure that the government's Export-Import Bank has quietly financed almost \$2 billion of such sales in the past five years, the 13 said they will oppose any House consideration of a bill to extend the bank's charter and enlarge its lending and guarantee powers until the review is completed.

"The issue goes to the heart of the growing crisis in confidence surrounding the Johnson administration," they said in a statement read at a news conference.

Interviewed separately, Chairman Wright Patman, T-Tex., termed the reference to a confidence crisis "nonsense and poppycock."

"I do not see that anything wrong was done in handling these loans without publicity," Patman said. "There are times when such things have to be done, or the country being helped may actually be harmed. There are cases where it would be better not to make the loan than to make it publicity."

"And don't forget the Russians are pouring out war materials to their so-called allies, without loans, without notes—just the goods. That's the competition we have to meet."

Rep. William S. Widnall of New Jersey was the principal spokesman for the Republican critics. He said they want the bill already approved by the committee to extend the bank's charter for five years and give it \$4.5 billion additional lending and guarantee authority returned for revisions.

Complaining that the committee was never told that "25 per cent to 30 per cent of the bank's lending was for arms sales in the past two years," Widnall said the group should now consider changes. Among these, he added, would be extending the charter only two years, so that Congress could review operations sooner, and reducing the additional lending authority.

Patman said he would oppose the bill back for reconsideration, but would prefer to wait for the Senate to act on a similar measure and then consider that bill as a basis for House action.

Several Democratic members have criticized the financing arrangement.